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AUTHOR Frase, Larry
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ABSTRACT

This guide examines the elements of the open space concept and offers insight and suggestions as to how to employ this process in the classroom. These elements are outlined as follows: (a) objectives--primarily to develop self-respecting, self-directing, autonomous individuals; (b) knowledge and method--with emphasis on cognitive or thinking processes, as opposed to information; (c) role of the student--including decision making, self-responsibility, self-direction, and cooperativeness; (d) role of the teacher--a facilitator acting as a guide and a resource person; and (e) evaluation--continuous, involving both the teacher and the student. Individualization, seen as the vehicle through which the objectives of open space are realized, is defined through the following four elements: (a) pacing--progression of students commensurate with their attitudes, abilities, and other factors; (b) objectives--differentiation of objectives to meet individual differences; (c) materials--selection result of individuals' different objectives; and (d) personalization--adaptation of teaching methods formed more closely to the learners' personality characteristics. Several questions, dealing with teachers' fears of open-spaced schools, are discussed. (JCW)

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A BRIEF GUIDE FOR TEACHERS TOWARDS THE UTILIZATION OF THE CONCEPT OF "OPEN SPACE" AS AN ASPECT OF INSTRUCTIONAL INDIVIDUALIZATION

EMPORIA KANSAS STATE COLLEGE
TEACHER CORPS
RESOURCE CENTER
ITEM NO. 281
FOR INSPECTION ONLY

by

Larry Frase
Elementary Associate
Arizona-Mesa Differentiated Staffing Consortium
Arizona State University

George N. Smith
Superintendent
Mesa Public Schools

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Douglas Vance
Executive Director-Elementary Education
Mesa Public Schools

Fenwick English-Director
Arizona-Mesa Differentiated Staffing Consortium

James K. Zaharis
Associate Director

SP 008 170

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Mesa, Arizona

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TOWARDS "OPEN SPACE"

With the announcement recently that two new elementary schools, Eisenhower and Roosevelt, will be built on "open space" designs, it becomes important that teachers and administrators begin to acquaint themselves with the concept of "open space." Actually, "open space" is not a thing, it is a way of looking at instructional individualization. As such, it is not a fad, not a "thing" that will come and go, but a fundamental and basic aspect of enabling instruction to be more effective with students. We believe that this brief guide by Larry Frase, a Mesa elementary teacher and now Elementary Associate with the Differentiated Staffing Project will offer some insight and concrete suggestions as to how to employ this useful process in the classroom. We offer this publication as a way of beginning to become acquainted with the idea.

Douglas S. Vance
Executive Director,
Elementary Education

O P E N S P A C E

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Frequently, the term "open space" acts as a conjurer. Teachers envision a vast area of open space occupied by swarms of students abusing either each other, or the furnishings and facilities which also occupy the "open space". Teachers and sometimes paraprofessionals also inhabit this pedagogically unwieldly environment. With this nightmare in full vision, the success of the open space concept, its applicability, and feasibility, to say the least, is on less than solid ground.

The preceding paragraph is surely exaggerated, but for some it approaches reality. To erase this "nightmare", it can be said that open space does not necessarily imply classrooms or classes of students larger than those found in a conventional school. To be sure, open space does not imply a refinement of the following practices that characterize the traditional classroom: teachers involved in expository and didactic lecturing, students playing subordinate passive roles, stringent autocratic discipline and classroom procedures, and total concentration on cognitive learning. Open space does imply an "atmosphere" different than that generally found in classrooms. This new atmosphere is characterized by students making decisions (pertinent ones), selecting, at least partially, their own objectives, resolving conflicts, experiencing freedom to direct themselves, and most important, being responsible for their activities. It is important to say

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at this point that not all traditional pedagogy is bad for all students; it has served some well. At the same time, it is fundamental to indicate that the American culture has progressed and changed since its conception. Early in our history, education was needed to eliminate widespread illiteracy; for the vast majority of citizens this objective has been accomplished. As the educative process grew in popularity, many more subjects were incorporated into the curriculum. As man's knowledge doubled and doubled again, the inability of the school to teach everything forced a fundamental shift to thinking skills and a renewed emphasis on learning desired attitudes. Part of the renewal emphasis on individualization is a response to this pressure.

Individualization is a practice that goes hand in hand with the "open space" concept. In fact, individualization is the vehicle or means through which the objectives of open space are realized. Therefore, open space can be considered as a plan for or design of individualization, and can be represented in the form of a model framework: objectives, knowledge, role of teacher, role of learner, organization, and evaluation. A closer examination of these elements may enhance understanding of the "open space" concept. (See diagram #1) To begin:

Elements of Open Space

Objectives: The primary goal is to develop self-respecting, self-directing autonomous individuals.

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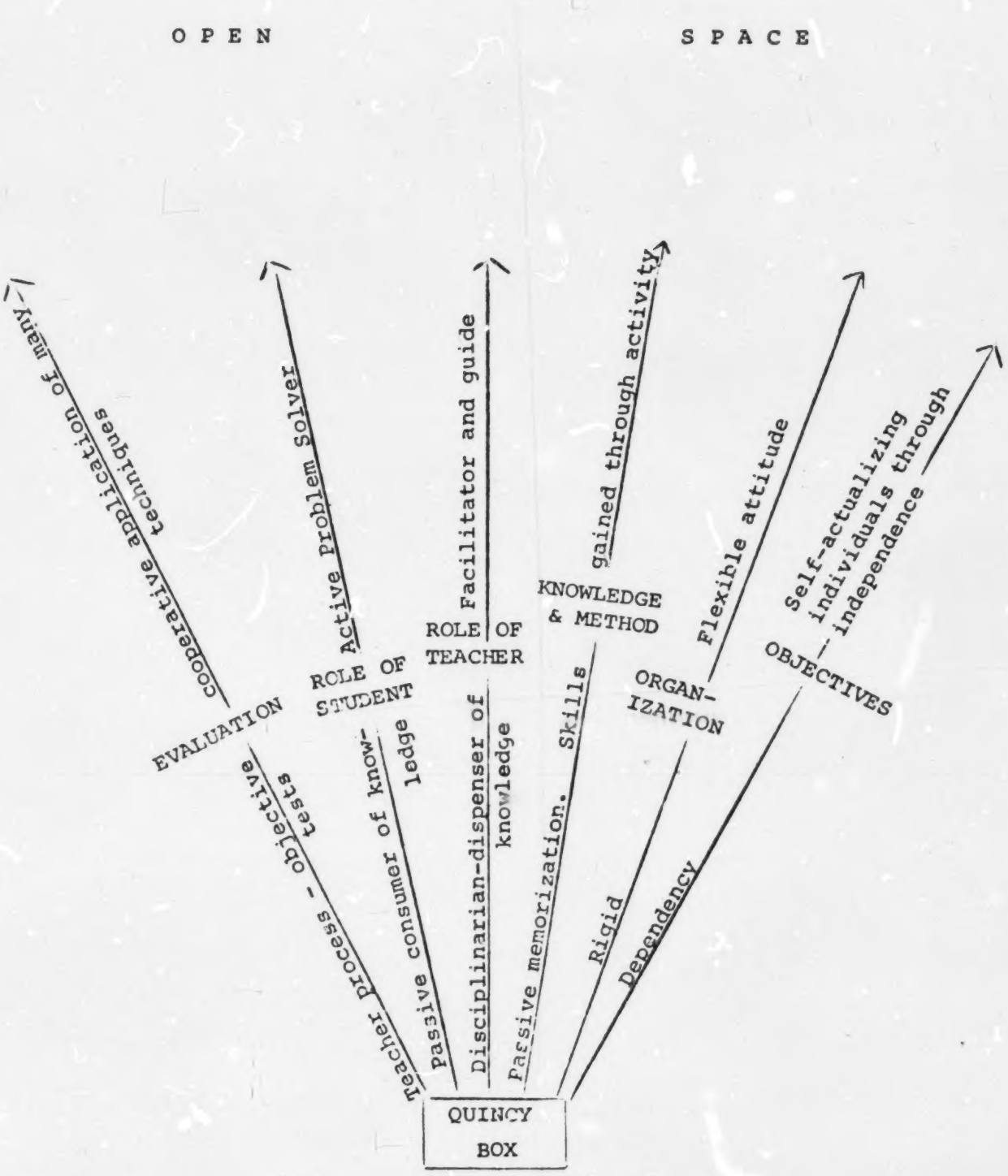

A MODEL FRAMEWORK FOR OPEN SPACE

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Assuming that open space is actually a form of individualization, then it can be said that the two are founded on the following premise: in an individualized program children are expected to spend a considerable portion of their time working independently. Independence is the key word. Developing self-respecting, self-directing autonomous individuals results in a unique style of individualization--one that emphasizes independence. Independence implies freedom and freedom must imply responsibility; therefore, it is crucial that teachers see to it that students learn to handle their independence responsibly. "I have many freedoms, but I do not have the right to infringe on the rights of others." "I wonder what I should schedule for the 9:00 period? If I schedule math I will miss the film, but if I schedule the film I may not have my math assignment done for tomorrow " are a sample of the types of concerns and expressions one might hear from children exploring the realm of the open space classroom and its accompanying rights and responsibilities. With this image in mind, school approaches life, not just an artificial preparation for it.

Knowledge & Method: Cognitive or thinking processes are of primary importance, information is secondary.

In open space, subject matter is viewed as one vehicle which leads to sophisticated cognitive processes. Traditionally, many educators have been possessed with the idealistic tradition of teaching subject matter as though it were a composite of truisms enduring throughout eternity. Although it has been taught in good faith, the realization now is that subject matter facts are not enduring, but instead are

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temporary presumptions of truth. The temporary validity of facts has vast implications for the type of instructional processes to be used in our schools. The traditional method of instruction has been "expository" in nature. In an expository situation the teacher communicates both the prerequisite knowledge and the advanced principles and conclusions to be dealt with. Although this method is still useful today, application of the following methods is encouraged with "open space":

Guided Discovery: The prerequisite knowledge or the principle and/or conclusion are communicated to the students by the instructor.

Directed Inquiry: For each instructional objective the prerequisite information is communicated by the instructor in a hierarchical form. In this manner, concepts, principles, and solutions to problems are derived by the student as the result of verbal cues and prompts provided by the instructor.

In comparison, it can be seen that expository instruction stresses only content. The student is not provided any opportunities to make independent discoveries. In directed inquiry and guided discovery both substansive knowledge and the methods for acquiring and utilizing knowledge are emphasized. Generally, but with some opposition, the following advantages for students are stated for directed inquiry and guided discovery:

1. Increased intrinsic motivation,
2. Development of a variety of inquiry approaches or response strategies that may be useful in a variety of learning situations,

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3. Development of confidence and trust in the reliability of both the knowledge and inquiry skills, and

4. Increased transfer and transfer efficiency.

Organization: Nongraded or graded, team teaching or one teacher per classroom.

The "open space" classroom is not dependent on any organizational structure. Generally, nongradedness, team teaching, flexible scheduling, and computers come to mind when one thinks of "open space" and the schools that carry its label. This is truly a misinterpretation of the concept. One room, thirty-five students, conventional facilities, conventional instructional materials, plus one teacher with the desire and attitude to create "open space" are all that is needed for the implementation and maintenance of a successful open space classroom. The starting place for change is not organizational patterns, but discontent with the present roles of students in today's classrooms. A nongraded organization is possible but at the same time an inflexible, autocratic classroom where little, if any, positive affective learning is occuring is also possible. Granted, nongraded vertical organization and team teaching can make a donation to "open space", but their absence is certainly not a prohibiting factor to the teacher with desire to innovate and change the climate and procedures within the confines of his own classroom.

In the "open space" classroom, students are grouped on the basis of specific skill needs, common interests, or by tasks requiring diversified talents. The individual has choices: he may choose to

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work alone; he may wish to join a listening session; or he may choose to work with friends. At other times the teacher may recognize the need to group students who demonstrate a need for instructional aid. Groups are temporary and constantly changing. They are formed with a goal in mind (cognitive or affective) and dissolved when the goal is accomplished.

Role of Student: Includes decision-making, self-responsibility, self-direction and cooperativeness.

Traditionally, the American classroom has been characterized by an active role for the teacher and a passive and dependent role for the learner. A passive role for the learner has limited potentiality for affecting real learner change.

Open space provides an active role for the learner. Independent student behavior is the major goal of open space programs. There are several areas in which the student must play a much more active role. These include:

a. decision-making,

b. self-responsibility,

c. self-direction, and

d. cooperativeness.

A. Decision or choice-making

The following are examples of the types of decisions students may face when operating in an open space program.

1. After reading a behavioral objective, a student must decide whether he possesses the skill or knowledge indicated in the objective. If he feels he does possess the skills, he may attempt to pass the performance standard, he may

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attempt to do so. If he succeeds, he may by-pass that particular learning activity. If he does decide that he is deficient in the type of learning stated in the objective, he must carry out the learning activity.

2. When choosing a learning activity, the student must decide which learning activity he wants to do and which resources to utilize.

3. To prevent an individualized program from becoming a mechanical, lock-step process, a student should have freedom to demonstrate his accomplishment of the objective at any time during his learning activities. This calls for decision-making. Students will soon become skilled in determining when they are adequately prepared to pass a performance standard.

B. Self-responsibility

In any educational program the student is ultimately responsible for his own learning. In contrast, students operating in an open space program are faced with more decisions than students operating in a conventional program, and therefore experience more responsibility than students operating in a traditional program. As previously mentioned, students operating in conventional programs experience too few situations involving self-direction, decision-making, and self-responsibility. Students operating in a successful individualized program have many opportunities to make choices and decisions, and therefore, to develop responsibility. Although student self-responsibility is a necessity for the success of an open space classroom, it is not generally a behavioral characteristic of students beginning work in this type of program. Students must have the freedom and the opportunity to experience responsibility in order to develop a sense of self-responsibility. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that students may misuse responsibility and make unfortunate decisions when

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confronted with their first experiences of this nature, but these mistakes are a vital element in the development of self-responsibility.

C. Self-direction

As previously stated, students operating in an open space program do not receive the extensive direction from the teacher as do students in a more traditional setting. Students must begin to take the initiative to direct themselves and to ask themselves, "What do I do next?", and then do it. Examples of situations where learners have the opportunity to ask themselves, "What do I do next?" are:

1. when deciding which resources to use,
2. when scheduling time,
3. upon discovering that the resource chosen for use is not available,
4. upon discovering that the film projector is not available or that the film is broken, and
5. when unable to understand a learning activity.

These situations may be disconcerting to students who have never had opportunities to direct themselves, but through experience and with counseling concerning their experiences, a student can learn to direct himself. Here is an example of one situation a student might encounter:

> A student new to an open space classroom has just read his learning activity and proceeds to obtain appropriate materials. Problem! The materials cannot be found. The student does not know what to do, so his progress in the learning activity is halted. In this situation, the student may engage in activities disruptive to the group. At this time, punishment by the teacher is ill-advised.

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A discussion of alternative activities in this situation is suggested. Through this process, the student will become *more efficient in managing similar situations in the future.*

Of course, students should not be expected to direct themselves and/or know "what to do next" in every instance. In these situations, teachers should expect and encourage students to request help. "Teacher-help" systems are often effective. The following systems are suggested:

Flag system - students place a paper flag of specific color or shape on their desks

Sign-up system - students sign-up on the chalkboard or "help list" when assistance is needed

D. Cooperativeness

Cooperative behavior with teachers and fellow students is certainly a worthwhile objective. The type of cooperation referred to includes not only the informality of sharing resources and being kind, which are important, but also a more formalized and educational form of cooperation, "tutoring". This (tutoring) type of cooperation seldom occurs haphazardly. Teachers need to be familiar with each student's strengths and weaknesses so that pupils may be teamed according to their needs. Pairs can be formed where both members derive benefit from the association. Example:

John (age 11, grade 5) has been demonstrating behavior indicative of low self-concept. This behavior may be due to his poor achievement or vice-versa.

Billy (age 8, grade 3) is having trouble learning to subtract.

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With their permission, Billy and John could be teamed to work cooperatively on Billy's subtraction problem. Benefits for John may be two-fold:

1. Cognitive-subtracting is easy for him so he gains a review and possibly a new understanding of the process; and
2. Affective - Billy is John's new admirer. This enhances John's self-concept and his behavior.

Benefits to Billy are most likely to be derived only from the cognitive domain in the form of increased ability to subtract, but positive changes in affective behavior are possible. If Billy has no older brother and is in need of a "model" or "image" to respect and look up to, then John may fill this role.

Role of the teacher: The teacher is a facilitator who acts as a guide and a resource person.

Often the teacher receives little attention in descriptions of the open space classroom. Because of this, it is often assumed that the teacher is actually of little importance. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is no decrease in the degree of importance; instead, there is a shift in the role played. This shift may place the teacher in an even more important position. Concerning the preceding discussion of "knowledge", it seems reasonable to expect the quality of students' inquiry and discovery to be enhanced with the expert participation of the teacher.

Thelen indicates that, as a facilitator, the teacher must encourage inquiry. This responsibility can be divided into three segments: 1) stimulating inquiry and investigation; 2) arranging for individuals

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and small groups to interact at thinking and feeling levels; and 3) guiding reflective thinking to build deeper meanings and clearer values.

Questions which help children explore divergent thinking-such as open-ended questions-function as a major tool in the inquiry process. Example: Instead of indicating to students that they will need jars, dirt and seed for a particular experiment, it is much more effective to pose the question "What problems do you observe and what materials do you think you will need to explore them?" Example: Instead of reporting that the ball rolled up the inclined plane instead of down because of the effect of the "center of gravity", etc., it enhances desire to inquire and discover if the teacher merely asks "How can you explain that?"

It is certainly not implied that the students will discover scientific truths that have taken experienced scientists many years to discover, but students will arrive at answers. Answers coupled with validity testing will lead to learning; possibly not facts as described by textbooks, but learning of processes which can lead to empirical knowledge.

Evaluation: Continuous, involves teacher and student.

Traditionally, paper and pencil tests have been the instruments used for evaluation purposes. The results of these tests have been used to compare the performance of one student against that of another student or an established standard. The notion that students should be compared to an arbitrary set standard or a group norm has no

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validity in the open space classroom. It is often reiterated that all students are individuals with varying capacities, abilities, and potentials. Therefore, students must be evaluated on the basis of their particular potential for growth and development. Any other standard would be invalid because each student is unique in every attribute. The open space classroom is dedicated to enhancement of differences and the development of human potential. Teachers see students in a state of creative growth, instead of moving in a predetermined path. When the comparison of scores between two individuals is assumed to be no longer valid, new evaluation procedures must be contrived. The first step in the development of new evaluation procedures is the involvement of students.

A starting place for this involvement may be the "pupil-teacher conference." As stated previously, student self-direction is a major objective of the open space classroom. Self-direction can be thought of as a composite of four components:

1. student assessment of his behavior, attitudes, his ability, and other pertinent information about himself;
2. planning on the basis of the assessment;
3. making decisions regarding the implementation of this plan; and
4. evaluation of the effectiveness of the plan.

In the student-teacher conference both parties cooperatively assess the student's effectiveness in performing these functions. In this process, the teacher must interact honestly and realistically with her pupils and encourage them to do the same.

Suggestions for student-teacher conferences

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If a student does have a problem in any particular type of learning (cognitive or affective) he should be encouraged to suggest a solution. If the student cannot or does not suggest a solution, the teacher may offer some of the following:

1. Work with a partner temporarily if the current assignment is difficult but apparently appropriate for him at this time;
2. Select a more appropriate assignment for the student;
3. Ask the student to seek the aid of the librarian or another student temporarily until his reference skills can be improved;
4. Ask the student to survey the areas of the room where materials are located;
5. Gather information on the number of unnecessary interruptions of students taking place in the classroom. (The principal, field consultant, or aide could assist in the information gathering...);
6. Suggest that the student move to a more appropriate area (perhaps the quiet study area);
7. Redefine area standard with small groups of students in the class;
8. Suggest that a student go on to another activity if the AV equipment or material is not available at the time rather than wait. He can do this later or go to another subject area; and
9. Adjust his contract for completion of assignment. (California Teacher Development Project, 1970, Fremont, CA.)

As a result of the counseling session, the changes might have to be of a more comprehensive nature. For example: the very immature student who is having difficulty attending to any task for more than a few minutes needs much support from the teacher until he achieves

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successful experiences. When this success occurs, gradual withdrawal of support while the student maintains the same level of achievement and success is possible. This change involves an extensive effort on the part of the teacher but has the potential of bringing about a comprehensive change in the student behavior.

An affective behavior checklist of student performance is presented on page 15 and 16. This instrument can be used for recording student behaviors. The information recorded can be used by the teacher and student in planning activities and solutions that will aid the student in his development of self-direction. Behaviors may be added or deleted by the individual teacher so that the checklist is characteristic of her stated goals.

_____ _____

Student's Name Date

CHECKLIST OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE
Affective Behavior

CARRYING THROUGH ON TASKS WITH RESPONSIBILITY AND EFFORT

_____ A. Started self-assigned or teacher assigned tasks promptly.

_____ B. Carried out task without reminder.

_____ C. Completed learning tasks or play activities in spite of interference from other students.

_____ D. Did thorough job on task.

_____ E. Continued beyond requirements of task.

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_____ F. Made efficient use of AV media or books.

_____ G. Planned a strategy or a schedule involving several tasks.

_____ H. Completed a strategy involving several tasks.

SHOWING INDEPENDENCE AND INITIATIVE

_____ A. Worked out satisfactory solution when faced by unfamiliar or unexpected situation.

_____ B. Developed appropriate solution for required activities previously reported as uninteresting.

_____ C. Verbally demonstrated independent thinking in face of verbal opposition to his ideas.

_____ D. Asked teacher or fellow student questions in an attempt to relate current content to previously learned concepts.

_____ E. Sought additional work or asked to make up work.

_____ F. Made up poem, song, or carried out original project.

_____ G. Voluntarily worked on task or tried to learn a special skill which was not a required assignment.

COMMENTS_____

_____ etc.

(Calif. Teacher Development Project, 1970, Fremont, Calif.)

These 15 behaviors relate to a student's performance in the classroom. During the conference the teacher and student can discuss which of these behaviors are occuring and check (✓) those behaviors. The remaining behaviors, those with no checkmarks, are the ones that need to be encouraged.

Other unique evaluation procedures may be found in Kohl (1969, pp. 106-112) and Howes (1968, pp. 98-100).

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As stated previously, individualization is the vehicle or means through which the objectives of open space are realized. It is crucial then that individualized instruction be examined in close detail.

Many and various definitions have been offered for individualized instruction; possibly the most accurate definition is "providing appropriate learning experiences for individuals." Regardless of the definition chosen, individualized instruction involves four basic elements: pacing, objectives, materials, and personalization. All elements are dealt with in their respective order.

Pacing

Attempt at individualization most often occur in the mathematics and reading areas. A logical reason for this emphasis is the sequential nature of these subject areas. These sequences can be envisioned as a continuum with the less complex concepts at one end acting as prerequisites to the more complex concepts at the other end. This sequential nature makes these subject matters easily adaptable to the elements of individualized pacing. The process is something like this. Through diagnostic procedures, students are assigned to a concept on the continuum that represents the edge of their knowledge in that subject area. Individuals then progress along the continuum at paces commensurate with their attitudes, abilities and other pertinent factors. Individualized pacing may involve little more than segmenting the textbook into a sequence

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of objectives (concepts) and posting this information so that students may use it as a syllabus.

There are prerequisites to a successful individualized pacing program. The first is student orientation. To work efficiently in this type of program, students must be introduced to the procedures before the program is implemented. Even after the program has been implemented, the first few weeks must be considered as a learning experience and a period of adjustment. Record keeping is another factor that must be considered. The progress of students must be monitored so that accurate reports can be made to parents and so that students may be organized for instruction on the basis of need.

Objectives

Often times individualized programs contain the same objectives for each student. In areas such as mathematics and reading, it is particularly difficult to individualize objectives since it is assumed that all students must learn to read, add, subtract, and divide, etc. Although the concept to be learned is the same for all students, some aspects of behavioral objectives are easily adapted to individual differences. To demonstrate:

> The student will compute on paper, after three learning activities and a conference with the teacher, the answers to ten problems such as the following within ten minutes and with no errors:

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Consider the previous objective as consisting of the following elements: (1) the doer; (2) overt behavior; (3) results; (4) given conditions; and (5) standard of acceptable performance. In the preceding objective, the doer is the "student", the overt behavior is "compute on paper", the results are "answers", the given conditions are "three learning activities, ten minutes, one teacher conference and "on paper", and the standard of acceptable performance is "no errors". With this format in mind, the differentiation of objectives to meet individual differences becomes more convenient; for instance, the doer, the overt behavior, and the results are constant but the given conditions and the standard of acceptable performance are easily changed. For some students the given condition may be 20 minutes, four learning activities and a conference with the teacher. The standard may be changed to 80 per cent or even 70 per cent and 20 instead of 10 minutes. In areas such as science, social studies, and health where the structure is not necessarily sequential, the entire objective (all five elements) may vary from student to student. These areas provide students the opportunity of selecting or even writing their own objectives.

Materials

Materials, as are objectives, are often more difficult to individualize than pacing. There is an obvious cause for this dilemma. Often times the only instructional materials purchased for mathematics or reading classes are textbooks; frequently the

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same textbook is purchased for every student. Textbooks are very useful instructional tools, but in an individualized classroom, students will be working on different objectives requiring various types of materials. For this reason, furnishing identical texts for all students is not a sound pedagogical practice. Providing instructional materials appropriate for every student requires ingenuity and creativity. Any games or textbooks written on different levels of sophistication can aid in individualizing. Sharing materials with other classrooms also helps.

When considering the three types of "resources": (1) physical - textbooks, etc.; (2) institutional - parks, zoos, etc.; and (3) human, we see that textbooks (physical) and teachers (human) are the two types of instructional resources generally employed. Institutional resources are seldom used because of expense, inconvenience and/or inapplicability. Textbooks are often used because they are plentiful. Teachers serve as the human instructional resource because they are available, but teachers are overburdened in this respect. Other human resources are available to provide instructional assistance. Students can often provide this assistance quite nicely. Pupil tutoring is an instructional technique and resource that is seldom tapped. Students may be grouped on the basis of need in the affective, psychomotor, and cognitive areas so that the best match may be attained. This tutoring practice can take place within the individual classroom or it might involve cross-age grouping with other classrooms in the school.

Personalization

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The last, but definitely not the least important, element is the personalized instruction provided by the teacher. Children have different learning styles and personality characteristics that must be considered in evaluation procedures and when providing instruction. To constantly emphasize the auditory mode when the child learns best through the visual mode or to treat the aggressive child in the same manner as the retiring child, is certainly not sound pedagogy. Types of thinking processes also need to be considered; deductive and inductive thought processes are examples. These two styles can be altered to better fit the learning strength of the child. In addition to learning styles and dominant cognitive processes, the degree of independence each child can efficiently manage must also be considered. For example, some children may require continuous assistance from the teacher in order to fit the "parts" together to form the "whole" while others may be capable of making discoveries quite independently; in this case the teacher needs to provide only a minimum of direction. To personalize instruction, factors such as those just mentioned need to be considered, and individualized for each child. To truly individualize instruction, all four elements must be individualized. Many individualized or "self-pacing" programs parade under the guise of "total individualization". Individualized-pacing means just that, students proceed through curricular sequences at paces commensurate with their attitudes and abilities. This is sound pedagogical practice, but without including

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If one student is working through the sequence presented in Diagram 2, or if all students are progressing through the sequence as a group, then the teacher would be performing the same functions for nearly all students at any given time and in a set sequence. In an individualized program students are working at various stages in the sequence at the same time, therefore, the teacher must perform different functions at various times and in no set sequence. Teacher activities are also presented in figure 2.

TEACHER CONCERNS AND DIFFICULTIES

As illustrated in the opening paragraph, teachers often fear the prospect of "open space," and rightfully so; many questions must be answered. A few of these questions and concerns are discussed on the following pages.

Student Control

When talking to teachers who have attempted to create open space, one can detect a common thread in their advice, "start the program off gradually!" An attempt to create an open space classroom in one day or in one week is sure to end in disaster. After functioning in a relatively autocratic classroom, students are generally not accustomed to decision-making. Consequently when one tried to develop an open space classroom students are often bewildered and frustrated. At times they insist on being directed or tend to misuse their new freedom.

The following three suggestions may be helpful in developing your open space classroom.

Diagram 2

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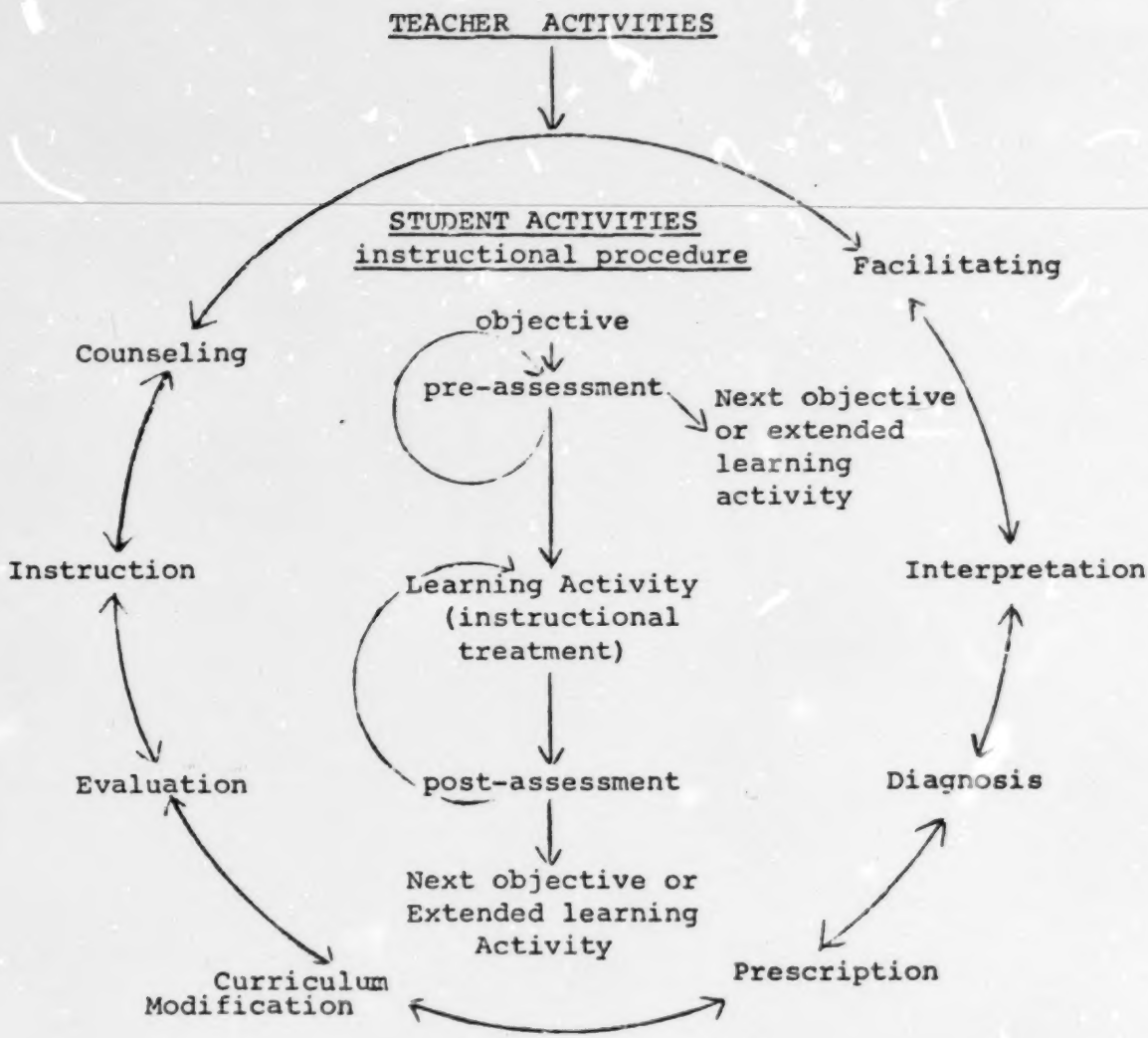
INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES- TEACHER AND STUDENT ACTIVITY



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objectives, materials, and personalization, true individualization does not exist. These elements can exist independently; individualizing one does not necessarily individualize another.

Procedures

A student's activity in an individualized program is often much different than a student's activity in a more conventional classroom. As stated previously, this activity is often independent, not teacher directed. A paradigm representing student activity in an individualized program is presented in diagram 2.

The model indicates numerous situations where students may channel or be channeled into different avenues as determined by their individual performance.

1. After taking the pre-assessment, and interpreting the results three avenues are possible.

   a. review prerequisite skills needed for efficient attainment of the new objective,

   b. engage in a learning activity as determined by the objective and the student's learning style, and

   c. engage in extended learning activity to develop breadth of understanding of current concept or advance to next objective in the sequence.

2. After taking the post-assessment and interpreting the results two avenues are possible:

   a. engage in another learning activity that develops the same concept if objective was not attained on first try, or

   b. advance to next objective in the sequence or engage in an extended learning activity to develop breadth of understanding of current concept.

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(1) Responsible decision making takes time, patience, and an acceptance of mistakes. To begin this process, allow students to make a few more decisions than they are normally accustomed to. Let students select, or give students an assignment that covers two or three days instead of one. The child must schedule his time and activities in this situation or face failure in completing his assignment. The student's first try may not be successful, but with counseling, planning, time, and confidence the student is likely to demonstrate success.

(2) Teachers have intuitive notions about how responsible students are. Select those students who are likely to be successful in handling self-responsibility, and let them work independently throughout the day or in a number of activities. Indicate to other students that when they feel as though they would like to accept the responsibility for directing themselves they may do so after discussing it with the teacher. The key to this technique is enforcing the verbal contract. When a child fails to use his time wisely he must be denied his freedom to direct himself.

(3) A more complicated approach is to let the students develop classroom rules and regulations. In this technique, as in the first two, teacher sincerity is crucial to success. When rules and regulations are determined by the teacher and students, they must be enforced until changed by a democratic procedure. A valid reason for changing a rule may be undue hardship on any one or number of people in the classroom. Autocratic teacher procedures are hazardous; they communicate insincerity to students. Implementing this procedure with just one segment of the day is advised over beginning with the entire day.

In summary, student commitment (self-responsibility/self-direction) will solve student control problems for the teacher and teacher aide in the development of a successful open space classroom, but these affective behaviors cannot be learned without the freedom to experience such situations. A practical hint for developing student self-commitment is taken from social psychology:

A study of consumer behavior in soda fountains showed that the

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sales would increase dramatically if customers were asked one type of question and sales decreased if the questions were asked in a different way. For example, sales went up if the customer was asked, "Would you like a large or small coke?" and sales went down if the question was "Would you like a coke?"

The implication is that it is not advisable to offer the child the option of learning or not learning as: for instance, "Mary, would you like to work this unit on changing nouns to adjectives?" Rather the choice offered the student should be to select from among different units. For example, "John which of these three units in biology would you like to explore: the unit on man, animals or plants?"

Conclusion

The following quote by Kohl summarizes many teacher concerns and attitudes that are crucial to the success of "open space":

> "An open classroom develops through the actions of the teacher and not because of his words...It took at least a year for me to be at ease in my classroom and to stop worrying about what was supposed to happen and start reacting directly to what was actually happening. Nothing developed magically; freedom and openness are not formulas for success...To have a free classroom is to present an environment where many people can discover themselves, and there is no simple set of rules to prescribe how this can be created."

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To determine your "open space index", record your answer in the appropriate blank to the left of each question.

YES NO

____ ____ 1. Are my classroom procedures conducive to student self-direction?

____ ____ 2. Are my behaviors, such as my facial expressions when asking and answering questions, conducive to student self-respect?

____ ____ 3. Do my instructional techniques generally allow for active student participation (discovery and inquiry) rather than passive listening?

____ ____ 4. Do I group and regroup students on the basis of need?

____ ____ 5. Do my classroom procedures allow students experiences in decision-making?

____ ____ 6. Do I provide students opportunities to assume responsibility?

____ ____ 7. Do I participate in my classroom as a facilitator, guide, and/or resource person rather than an autocratic dispenser of knowledge?

____ ____ 8. Do I evaluate students on basis of ability rather than comparison to group norm?

____ ____ 9. Do I use attitude inventories and behavior checklists rather than only objective tests to evaluate my students?

____ ____10. Are grades determined in my classroom through a cooperative student-teacher process?

____ ____11. Do I provide different objectives for different students as determined by need?

____ ____12. Do I allow different amounts of time for different students to complete objectives?

____ ____13. Do I recognize different "learning styles"?

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YES NO

____ _____14. Do I provide learning materials and activities based on these individual "learning styles"?

____ _____15. Am I willing to accept student misuse of responsibility and freedoms as a critical learning experience in affective development?

____ _____16. Am I willing to let students select and determine a number of objectives?

____ _____17. Do I view the student as an active, sensing, impressionable individual?

____ _____18. Do I recognize affective objectives (attitudes, values) as pertinent and relevant for consideration in my classroom?

Review the content of the questions for which you replied "no". Closely examine the "why" behind your "no" answer. Based on the information provided in this booklet and your professional consideration, re-answer the questions originally marked "no". Now, count your "yes" responses. The more "yes" responses you gave the closer you are to "open space."

Plot your "open space index" on the space continuum below.

CLOSED OPEN

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

SPACE SPACE

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